

# **Abuse and Preventable Poisonings from Medicines in the Home**

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Prescription drug abuse is the fastest-growing drug problem in the country. Unwanted medicines left in the home endanger our children, seniors and pets. The following are alarming statistics on the problem of abuse and preventable poisoning from prescription and over-the-counter medicines found in the home.

- Drug overdoses in Washington have surpassed car crashes as the leading cause of accidental deaths. The majority of these overdoses involved prescription opiates.<sup>1</sup>
- Fatal poisonings increased 395% from 1990 to 2006 in Washington State; 85% of these deaths involved medicines.<sup>2</sup>
- 32% of child poisoning deaths in Washington were caused by someone else's prescription medication and 26% were caused by over-the-counter medications.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2006-2011 there were 1,360 drug overdose deaths in King County from prescription opiates (848) and sedatives (512).<sup>4</sup>
- The 209 overdose deaths in King County in 2010 are equivalent to a crash of a full Boeing 737.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2009 there were 3,855 emergency department visits in King County related to prescription opiates (2,960) and sedatives (895).<sup>6</sup>
- Emergency room visits in Seattle for non-medical use of prescription opiates went up 47% from 2004 to 2007.<sup>7</sup>
- 767 residents in King County were admitted for drug treatment for prescription opiates (701) and sedatives (66) as the primary drug at treatment admission in 2011.<sup>8</sup>
- 942 calls about prescription opioids were made to the Washington State Poison Center in 2010 from residents of King County.<sup>9</sup>
- 39% of heroin users said they got addicted to prescription painkillers before starting to use heroin in a 2010 study in King County.<sup>10</sup>
- Our medicine cabinets provide teens with easy access to drugs – in 2010 survey data show over 70% of those who abused prescription pain relievers got them from friends or relatives, while approximately 5 percent got them from a drug dealer or over the Internet.<sup>11</sup>
- Medicines are consistently the top reason why people contact the Washington Poison Center, with kids and seniors at the greatest risk. The Washington Poison Center's 2011 "top Ten" substances causing poisonings of adults and children include: #1-Ibuprofen, #2-Benzodiazepines, #4-Antihistamines, excluding Benadryl, #5-SSRI Antidepressants, #6-Antibiotics, #8-Atypical antipsychotics, and #10-Acetaminophen.<sup>12</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Center for Health Statistics, Washington State Department of Health (2009). Age-Adjusted Rates for External Causes for Residents, 1999-2008. Available online at: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/CHS/chs-data/death/htmltables/e1.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> Washington State Department of Health. (2008). "Poisoning and drug overdose." Washington State Injury and Violence Prevention Guide. DOH Publication No: 530-090. Available online at: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/emstrauma/injury/pubs/icpg/DOH530090Poison.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Sabel, J. (2004). Washington State Childhood Injury Report – Poisoning Chapter. WA DOH. Available online at: <http://www.childdeathreview.org/reports/WashingtonStateChildhoodInjuryReport.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> King County Medical Examiner. 2011. Data coding and analysis by Caleb Banta-Green, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington.
- <sup>5</sup> Banta-Green, C. et.al. (2010). Drug Abuse Trends in the Seattle/King County Area: 2010. Accessed online at: [http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG\\_Seattle\\_June2011.pdf](http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG_Seattle_June2011.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Drug Abuse Warning Network. 2009. Emergency Department Visiting in King County MSA in 2009. Data provided by Caleb Banta-Green, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington.
- <sup>7</sup> Banta-Green, C. et al. (2007). The Use and Abuse of Prescription-Type Opiates in Washington State. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington. Available online at: [http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/arb/PrescriptionOpiates\\_March30\\_2007.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/adai/pubs/arb/PrescriptionOpiates_March30_2007.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> Washington Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. 2011. King County Residents, Drug Treatment Admission 2011 Primary Drug at Treatment Admission. Data obtained via Treatment Analyzer by Caleb Banta-Green, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute and, University of Washington.
- <sup>9</sup> Banta-Green, Caleb, et al. 2011. Drug Abuse Trends in the Seattle/King County Area in 2010. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington. Available online at: [http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG\\_Seattle\\_June2011.pdf](http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG_Seattle_June2011.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> Banta-Green, C. et.al. (2010). Drug Abuse Trends in the Seattle/King County Area: 2010. Accessed online at: [http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG\\_Seattle\\_June2011.pdf](http://adai.washington.edu/pubs/cewg/CEWG_Seattle_June2011.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2011. Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings, NSDUH Series H-41, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 11-4658. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2011. <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k10NSDUH/2k10Results.htm#2.16>
- <sup>12</sup> Washington Poison Center. 2011. Top Ten for 2011. Available online at: <http://www.wapc.org/about/statistics/top-ten-substance-exposures-for-2011/>